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THE COMMUNICATOR

The USAID PHN Newsletter for CAs

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The Communicator's Goals:

- * To increase the flow of information between USAID's Bureau for Global Health and CAs engaged in

communications and public relations work

- * To enhance awareness of the need to disseminate news about our work and to show why it is important

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If you would like back issues of The Communicator, e-mail dgupta@pal-tech.com.

In this issue, we're issuing a call for stories showing success in global health initiatives and we're offering practical advice and applicable tools that every communicator should possess, including writing effective press releases and creating stories with a "news hook." Also in this edition are some progressive techniques relevant in an Internet and e-mail driven world, including e-mail marketing schemes and networking resources with like-minded communicators. And, as always, there are examples to illustrate these communications ideas and more resources to aid you in your continued communication efforts.

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WE'D LIKE YOUR HELP

USAID's Bureau for Global Health, headed by Assistant Administrator Anne Peterson, is collecting success stories about our work into a single, consolidated, searchable database. The idea behind the database is to help Anne, Duff, Margaret, and others here at USAID

who speak to Congress, the press, Capitol Hill representatives, and international groups to quickly and efficiently access success stories to share with these audiences. Keeping our database fresh, current, and full of stories is vital to communicating and advocating our work and the good we all do. We encourage you to draw from briefs you are already writing or have written and send as much or as little information to us so we can add it to this database (sample blurb below). If you have an interesting conversation with the mission about some impressive statistics evidencing progress or improvement, type it up in a quick e-mail and pass it along. You know how important it is to communicate the progress of our programs and the deep impacts they can make in the communities where we work. So please send us your stories! They will be used and to prove it, we'll track the use here on these pages.

Success Story Example 1: Behavior Change in Zambia

A USAID-supported mass media campaign aimed at young adults in Zambia has contributed to such behavior changes as delayed onset of sexual activity and fewer sexual partners. These changes have contributed to a 42 percent reduction in HIV prevalence among 15- to 19-year-olds. The media campaign produced television advertisements, radio spots, and an award-winning music video called "Abstinence is Cool."

Success Story Example 2: Protecting the Health of Hurricane Mitch Victims in Nicaragua

EHP recently completed the Rural Water Supply, Sanitation, and Environmental Health Reconstruction Program--a USAID-funded activity to protect and improve the health status of families affected by Hurricane Mitch in rural or resettled population centers in Nicaragua. Strategies included increasing sustainable water supply and sanitation services, improving hygiene behavior, and providing community organization and education programs for populations in affected areas.

EHP worked with a number of partners, many that were already established in Nicaragua before the hurricane, such as CARE, SAVE, and Johns Hopkins University. EHP provided grants, management, and technical oversight to support the partnering PVOs as they worked with communities, conducting hygiene education programs and reconstructing or building water and sanitation systems. The activity exceeded its objectives as the statistics below illustrate, reaching an estimated 215,000 beneficiaries and resulting in significant improvements in hygiene practices and health.

A significant impact of the activity was the adoption of what the environmental health director of the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health termed a "new paradigm," shifting from interventions consisting solely of water and sanitation measures to interventions in preventive health that incorporate a central focus on water and sanitation.

Program Targets	Program Output	
* Water supply systems	2,565	2,692
* Household latrines	5,973	7,226
* Environmental projects	832	3,503
* Wells drilled	190	295
* Services provided to health clinics	39	40

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RESOURCES FOR YOU

Preparing the Perfect Press Release

Domenick Cilea of Marlboro, New Jersey-based Springboard Public Relations offers advice to keep the process of writing press releases focused and in the right perspective. The purpose of writing a release is to garner media coverage by providing necessary information succinctly, while provoking thought and building credibility. The most common mistakes when writing a press release are sensationalized, exaggerated language, lengthy delivery, and/or impractical construction. By following the four considerations Cilea outlines, namely Timely, Honest, Informative, and Newsworthy (or THIN), you can ensure your release stays on the right track.

- * **TIMELY:** Prepare announcements ahead of time to ensure your announcement is newsworthy and interesting. Coordinate the release with an event, other news item, or other announcement to reap the most from your release.
- * **HONEST:** Simply present the facts without a self-serving, promotional tone. Credibility must be earned and exaggerations or misleading information will ultimately undermine your efforts.
- * **INFORMATIVE:** Double and triple check your content to make sure that the reason for the release and the facts within the release are accurate and clearly stated. Always use the 5WH method as a guide (Who, What, When, Where, Why and How).
- * **NEWSWORTHY:** Remember the goal of a press release is to offer news or interesting facts to spur a reader to action or elicit a response. If your subject matter does not do this, it is probably not worthy of a release, especially when considering that the press receives releases like yours on an hourly basis.

Communications Lesson #2: Stories To Hook Your Audience

Following up on our last issue, here is another practical lesson brought to you by The Spin Project, devoted to assisting social change organizations with their communications efforts. This lesson presents best frameworks to get reporters to read your stories. Using some of the hooks highlighted below, ask yourself whether your story contains any of the elements that will grab readers' attention. If not, use these suggested frameworks to reposition your story and make it more interesting and accessible. Although The Spin Project offers these hooks specifically to target reporters, you can apply these to other audiences, such as local communities and other donors. Rather than reciting facts and figures to communicate your successes, you can relay the same information in a different framework, presenting it from a more creative angle - a sure-fire way to engage a better and broader audience.

- * **DRAMATIC HUMAN INTEREST.** Include the stories of real people, their triumphs, tragedies, adventures, and anecdotes.

- * **TIMELINES/CALENDAR.** Capture something coming up on the calendar. "Back to school" can be a hook for the importance of child immunizations.
- * **LOCALIZE NATIONAL STORY** (and vice versa). Take a nationally breaking story and emphasize its local impact, e.g., use the Summit for the Child to show how your child survival programs have had an impact in the developing world.
- * **PROFILES AND PERSONNEL.** Feature individuals, community leaders, or galvanizing spokespersons who may become news themselves because of their fascinating stories.

To view these recommendations and others, see
http://www.spinproject.org/resources/news_hooks/index.html.

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ADVANCES IN DIRECT MAIL: EVOLUTION TO E-MAIL

Okay, so you don't think you have a news release, but you still want to get out the word about a new project. One way could be to adapt the practices of the marketing community. Gartner G2, a research service from Gartner, Inc., finds that e-mail marketing is a more cost-effective way to reach individuals. While Gartner G2's recommendations are directed to an advertising audience, e-mail marketing strategies can be applied to information sharing and constituent-building within our work in international health. For example, information sharing or updates about events and programs, news, updates, or solicitations to interested groups can be done within an e-mail marketing framework. Gartner G2 offers the following recommendations to organize an effective e-mail marketing campaign:

- * Personalize messages to constituents with specifics about their relationship to your organization.
- * Allow constituents opportunities to provide feedback and address this feedback in subsequent e-mailings.
- * Limit the number of e-mails to no more than two per day.
- * When sending permission-based e-mails, consolidate lists from addresses that were obtained through opt-in means and allow people a way to opt-out.

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POP/RH PORTAL LAUNCH ANNOUNCED

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Development Gateway Foundation launched the POP/RH Portal, an Internet initiative focusing on population and reproductive health. The Portal will provide a community built database of shared population information, including data, research, projects, ideas and dialogue. It will also seek to promote innovative knowledge-sharing arrangements among expert organizations in the field.

The POP/RH Portal is being built in collaboration with 12 partner institutions from the population community, including Johns Hopkins University, PATH, and Population Reference Bureau, linking it to resources on their Web sites and to those of other population and development organizations. UNFPA will manage and "guide" the Portal with technical support from the Development Gateway team.

Notable features include the following:

- * News service
- * Bulletin board
- * Events calendar
- * Search features
- * Population/reproductive health project information from a shared database of activities by donor agencies such as USAID, the World Bank and UNFPA
- * Discussion forums on reproductive health and population topics

Visitors to the Web site are able to sign up for free membership, which entitles them to receive regular updates on new resources that are added. To learn more about the Portal and/or to subscribe, go to <http://www.developmentgateway.org/pop>.

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GLOBAL INTERSECTIONS(r)

Global Intersections(r) is a monthly online news digest and information service, with news and features useful to journalists around the world who report on the social, economic, scientific, and political factors related to (1) Population and Development, (2) Sexual and Reproductive Health, (3) the Environment, and (4) Child Health and Labor. Whenever possible, Global Intersections features innovative proposals to improve reproductive and sexual health, extend the benefits of family planning, improve the status of women and girls, provide education and job opportunities for all, reduce over-consumption in developed nations, and protect the global environment.

To subscribe, e-mail list@population.org and in the body of the message type: subscribe global intersections.

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GLOBAL ACTION NETWORK

Global Action Network, a project of the Public Health Institute, is a new online organization designed to connect and empower young leaders working in population and reproductive health.

Currently, the network maintains over 350 members from over 100 countries. At the Global Action Network Web site, you gain access to a virtual gathering place and resource center for innovators worldwide who are passionate about global population and reproductive health issues. Members include people of all ages, countries, and viewpoints.

The Global Action Network aims to improve reproductive health programs by diversifying the group of individuals working in the field and providing leadership development and opportunities to build capacity, improve programs, expand mobility, and increase resources.

To learn more about the Network, go to <http://www.globalactionnetwork.org/>.

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WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING

On the Horizon: Are More Young People in South Africa Using Condoms?

"On the Horizon" is an electronic news capsule from the Horizons, which is implemented by the Population Council in partnership with the International Center for Research on Women, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health, Tulane University, Family Health International, and Johns Hopkins University. Horizons (<http://www.popcouncil.org/horizons/horizons.html>) is a global operations research program designed to:

- * Identify and test potential strategies to improve HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and support programs and service delivery.
- * Disseminate best practices and utilize findings with a view toward replication and scaling up of successful interventions.

In the last issue, Horizons presented the results of the "Transitions" study of adolescent life and found that "connectedness to parents" is a potential factor in condom usage among adolescents. The goal of the study is to contribute to the design and refinement of policies and programs to help young people make healthy transitions from adolescence to adulthood.

To view the entire story and data results, go to
[http://www.popcouncil.org/horizons/newsletter/horizons\(3\)_2.html](http://www.popcouncil.org/horizons/newsletter/horizons(3)_2.html).

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YOUR FEEDBACK

With your participation this newsletter can increase our interaction and participation in getting the word out about what we do. Let us know what you would like to see in this newsletter, what topics you want covered, or what additional items should be included to make it. We also encourage you to become a contributor: Pass along stories about your program, including poignant accounts, major accomplishments, new publications, awards received, or upcoming conferences to dgupta@pal-tech.com.

Also, if you know people who should get this newsletter, let us know so we can add them to our subscribers list.

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